

Webinar:

Georgia Reads Community Award Application Webinar Summary

This document summarizes the key information and advice shared during the webinar regarding the Georgia Reads Community Award application. The presentation was led by **Brittney Bailey**, Project Coordinator for the Georgia Council on Literacy and Georgia Reads, and **Ryan Hirsch** with the Dunnigan Deal Center.

Georgia Reads Overview

The Georgia Reads Statewide Literacy Initiative was established following Governor Kemp's signing of two bills in 2023:

- **Senate Bill 211:** Established the **Georgia Council on Literacy**.
- **House Bill 538:** Mandated the implementation of the science of reading.

The Council is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the science of reading, including teacher training, reading screeners, and interventions for students with reading difficulties. Georgia Reads is dedicated to strengthening alignment and collaboration across the state's literacy landscape.

The Community Award

The Georgia Reads Community Award highlights communities making a real difference in helping children and adults become strong, confident readers.

Eligibility Requirements:

- At least **2 years of meaningful involvement** in literacy work.
- Involvement of **two or more collaborating organizations**.
- Commitment to literacy goals and demonstration of past achievements.

Award Benefits (for winning communities):

- **\$20,000** to extend literacy work.
 - Recognition from **Malcolm Mitchell** with a reading rally visit.
 - Up to **1,000 books** for students.
 - An **external evaluation** by the Deal Center.
 - Opportunities to collaborate with state leaders.
 - The best practices shared will help shape recommendations from the Georgia Council on Literacy at the state level.
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Application Structure and Scoring

Application Sections

The application is structured to help applicants tell their story and includes sections on:

- Contact Information
- Community Need
- Goals and Activities
- **Partnerships**
- **Data and Analysis**
- Budget Justification
- Sustainability
- Program Overview

Reviewers want to see how these "puzzle pieces" fit together, ensuring goals, partnerships, data, and sustainability all connect logically.

Rubric and Feedback

The application is scored on a 5 to 0 point scale with weighted criteria. Scorers (from both inside and outside the literacy scope) provide feedback, including strengths, concerns, and recommendations, to help applicants strengthen future endeavor.

Application Portal Upgrade

For the current year, the application process was upgraded with an online portal on **GeorgiaReads.org**.

- Applicants can create a username and login.
- Progress can be saved to finish later.
- The portal includes character limits and provides email notification.
- The goal is to make the process easier to complete and track.

Critical Application Components

Data and Analysis

Data is increasingly important and must tell your story in numbers, demonstrating measurable impact over the last two to five years.

Key Advice for Data:

- **Focus on Impact:** Include baseline and current data on key metrics like literacy scores, preschool enrollment, or other metrics that show positive change.

- **Use Percentages/Comparisons:** Use these for clarity and link the data directly to the activities and developments describe.
 - **Quality over Quantity:** Choose impactful data points rather than a lot of data that may not speak to your goals.
 - **Connect Activities to Success:** Don't just list a number, like books provided. Explain what that number accomplished and how it's measuring success in "moving the needle" on literacy.
 - **Think Outside the Box:** Recognize that ELA scores may take years to show progress. Consider other metrics like attendance growth for literacy programs or community meetings to show increasing interest.
 - **Local Context Matters:** Use data that makes sense for your area, as winners, even in rural areas, have effectively used what they had to influence better literacy.
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Partnerships

The application requires two or more collaborating partnerships.

Key Advice for Partnerships:

- **Active Roles are Crucial:** Partnerships should not just be names on a list. They must have a **clear role and responsibility, evidence of shared planning and accountability**, and examples of **joint activities**.
- **Solve Community Barriers:** Collaborations should help eliminate a barrier to learning. For example, Marietta City Schools partnered with Wellstar and the local library to provide vision screenings and glasses, addressing a barrier to literacy.
- **Leverage Local Assets:** Assess the unique needs and barriers in your community (e.g., ESL, low-poverty) and then strategically use the partners in your area to address those specific needs.
- **Collaboration Beyond the Lead:** Show how partners collaborate with *each other*, not just with the lead participant, creating a network to achieve the goals.
- **Potential Partners:** Partnerships can include schools, nonprofits, local government (like mayors, as with Dalton's mayor who championed the application), healthcare, faith-based organizations, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, GMA, CLCPs, and Family Connection contacts.

Important Dates and Next Steps

Event	Date/Time
Application Deadline	December 5th at 4:59 PM
Applicant Notification	January 2026
Georgia Reads Day at the Capitol (Winner Recognition)	February 2026
Community Visit/Reading Rally with Malcolm Mitchell	Spring 2026 (Scheduled with winners)

Frequently Asked Questions and Clarifications

- **Lead Applicant Preference:** There is no preference (e.g., nonprofit vs. school district). The lead applicant should be the organization that is primarily **implementing, leading, and facilitating** the activities and collecting the data. The key is to make the organizational structure clear and logical².
- **Multiple Applications from One Location:** While two organizations from the same geographic location (e.g., Marietta and Cobb Collaborative) have won in the same year because their projects were distinct and scored highly, the preference is for communities to submit one strong, collaborative application to ensure limited resources benefit multiple areas.
- **Scope of the Award:** The application is for **birth to adult** literacy efforts at the community level, not just K-12.
- **Award vs. Grant:** This is an **award** of \$20,000, not a grant. You are required to align your spending with the budget sheet you outlined in your application.
- **Local Municipalities:** Local municipalities (like mayors' offices) are absolutely eligible to be the lead applicant.
- **Printing the Application:** You can download and print a draft of the application, budget instructions, and tips from the application landing page on **GeorgiaReads.org** to map out your answers before logging into the portal. However, you cannot print the completed application from the portal.

Contact and Resources

For questions about the application, please reach out to **Brittney Bailey** via email at bryttney.bailey@gosa.ga.gov. She can offer expertise on section expectations and refer you to relevant contacts, but cannot assist in building the application.

- **Website:** GeorgiaReads.org is the hub for all information, including the application portal, FAQs, and a link to download a draft of the application.
- **Next Webinar:** Malcolm Mitchell, Georgia Reads Coach, will host a conversation with Marietta City Schools and Wellstar on **October 16th** (a week from the date of the presented discussion) to share best practices in partnerships.
- **Social Media:** Follow Georgia Reads on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram (via links on GeorgiaReads.org) for real-time updates.